

Conviction

By: Logan Wamsley

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Zane--male, late 20s, early 30s

Javan (pronounced "Hay-vahn")--male, mid to late 20s

Hooded Figure--female, late 20s to early 30s

SETTING

A prison cell

TIME

Present day

(A 2 bed prison cell, with each bed on opposite ends parallel to the side walls. The rear wall is decorated with a toilet and adjacent sink. A slender window lines the top edge of the rear wall far out of reach, of which slivers of light shine through its slender bars. A wall of steel bars separates the audience from the cell, with a cell door in the center; the bars should be far enough to present the audience with a clear view of the stage, but narrow enough to keep an individual incarcerated. Enough room should be left downstage for someone outside the cell to walk freely.)

(Blue moonlight shines through the rear window. Javan is asleep in the bed stage right. Zane is upright, polishing a lump of coal with a scrap of cloth. The sound of a heavy door unlocking and opening startles him. He hides the coal lump under his pillow and feigns sleeping. A robed figure enters, carrying a tray of food. He slides the tray under the bars into the cell and moves to exit. Zane rises and approaches the bars.)

Zane

Hey you. There's...only one tray here. It's not enough. We need two.

(The robed figure stands still, facing away from the cell.)

Hey Friar Tuck! I'm talkin' to you! We need more food or we'll starve, you hear me!?

The last time you did this, I woke up with *that* freak chewing on my toenails. I don't want to wake up to him chewing on my toenails. I'd like to chew my own toenails, if you don't mind. So please...I'm asking kindly...sir...I'd like to get just a little bit more to eat, and you won't hear a peep from me all day. I swear.

(He bangs on the bars.)

Say something, dammnit!

(The robed figure exits.)

No wait--wait! Where you going--kitchen's the other way--ah hell...

(A beat.)

Your uniform sucks! Who wears bathrobes anymore anyway...

(He turns and rouses Javan.)

Get up. Breakfast is served.

(Javan turns towards the wall, still asleep.)

Javan

(dreaming) I want pancakes ma...

(Zane pulls the pillow from under his head.)

Zane

Get up before I eat it myself.

(Javan stirs, curls up his legs, and kicks Zane lightly in the stomach.)

Javan

You're on my side of the cell, touching my pillow, and you don't even have pancakes.

(Zane pops him with the pillow.)

Zane

You chewed off my toenails; I think that gives me a permanent right of personal intrusion.

Javan

I was nervous. My nails weren't long enough, and I chew nails when I get nervous. And I get nervous when I get hungry, and that was *your* fault for eating the last sweet roll last night. I had dibs!

Zane

I never had a sweet roll before! You always take it first. Why don't you eat *my* half for a change? Variety is the spice of life--I'm sick of shitting out corn kernels. I couldn't even remember the last time I shitted out a sweet roll. What does it look like in the toilet--does it come out like soft serve? Thick and creamy? 'Cause I'll tell you, by God, corn kernels shit hard! Reeal hard! They stick together so tight they reverb in E-minor as they hit the porcelain! If they gave me a full ear I could shit a harmony to *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot!*

Javan

And you wonder why I always let you have the corn?

Zane

It's common courtesy! Fucking cellmate etiquette 101! Looks like they're not going to give us a second tray, so we might as well try to split the food a little differently every once in awhile...One day, *you* take the sweet roll...and one day *I'll* take the sweet roll.

Javan

But I want the sweet roll...

Zane

So do I!

Javan

Did you ask for a second tray like you said you would?

Zane

...Yeah.

Javan

And...

Zane

Nothing.

Javan

Nothing...I'm not buying it. Isn't there a law that they have to feed us properly? Like, a last meal or something?

Zane

A last meal?

Javan

Yeah. The one they give you before...they...

(A beat. They both look at the tray. Zane picks it up and offers it to Javan.)

Zane

Here mate. You can have it.

(Javan pushes the tray back.)

Javan.

Oooh no. I know your game. You take it. It's yours.

Zane

My token of apology. Look, its even got a fresh sweet roll.

Javan

My mouth still tastes like toe jam. I won't be able to appreciate it. Here: eat, shit, and be merry.

Zane

I'm not hungry.

Javan

Neither am I.

Zane

Eat it!

Javan

No!

Zane

Idiot!

Javan

Teabagger!

Zane

Republican!

(The tray spills. Food flies everywhere.)

Javan

Nice job. Now we'll both starve.

Zane

No good deed goes unpunished. One guy offers you food and--

Javan

You were trying to get me killed!

Zane

Now at least I know you'll eat it. You don't seem to have a problem with things touching the floor.

Javan

Neither will you...Give it time. You're still young. Every man has a breaking point.

Zane

I'm just as old as you are, freak. Might even be older.

Javan

No--I mean prison young. Oh you pretty little prison virgin. Tsk tsk tsk. Nothing's popped your sweet little sanity cherry. Look at you, all spick and span...You won't touch food on the ground outside of the five second rule, but then sometime, someday those seconds are going to slow down. Those five seconds will feel like five minutes, five minutes becomes five years, and then you'll wander how many more lifetimes you'll have to serve 'fore they let you out. And then you'll feel the wrinkles on your face, the lines over your eyes, but your reflection in the toilet bowl will stay the same, and you'll wander who that young man is--no, that can't be *you*... because you're old. In your soul you'll be so old.

(He looks in the toilet bowl.)

Hey there young fella. As sprightly as ever. Hmmm?

(He sticks his ear in toilet bowl.)

What's that you say?

(He looks at Zane)

He says he likes the corn.

Zane

Javan my friend, you need help.

Zane flushes the toilet.

Javan

Noooo!

A beat.

You flushed me!

Zane

I'm sorry.

(Zane eyes the spilled food and walks over to the discarded sweet roll. He picks it up, examines it, and wipes it on his shirt.)

Javan

You know something Zane?

Zane

What?

Javan

I can't remember how old I am. Not even my birthday. How old do you think I am?

Zane

Eh...about...27?

Javan

That's such an ugly number. I don't want be 27.

Zane

Truth hurts. Here. This will make you feel better. I don't think one roll qualifies as a last meal. More like a...next-to-last horderve.

(He offers the sweet roll.)

Javan

No thanks. Your hands are dirty.

Zane

Take it or I'm giving it to your reflection.

Javan

No! It'll make him fat.

(He takes the sweet roll.)

What's on your hands anyway? They're pitch black.

(Zane eyes his blackened hands.)

Zane

Oh...umm...nothing.

Javan

The cell's not that dirty.

Zane

Just forget it.

(He washes his hands in the sink violently. Javan bites into the sweet roll.)

Javan

(with mouth full) You know...a man doesn't see hands like that every day. Them be workin' hands. All dusty under the unchewed nails...And if you're working on

something...that means you got something to work on! Oh, that's it, isn't it! You have a project!

Zane

(whispers) Shut it!

Javan

Oh, sorry. *(whispers)* Is it a secret?

Zane

It's none of your business.

Javan

Well alright then...maybe I can guess.

(He takes another bite.)

It tastes...fine...powdery...Is it cocaine?

Zane

Cocaine's white, dumbass.

Javan

How would you know?

Zane

I...I wouldn't...nope, have no idea.

Javan

No...too obvious anyway...it's...

(He licks Zane's hand. Then he spits. Zane pushes him away, and washes even more violently.)

Zane

What the fuck!?

Javan

It's dirt! Have you escaped? Have you been outside!?

Zane

I told you to can it!

(Javan runs to the bars.)

Javan

GUARDS!!! WE'VE GOT A SECURITY BREACH!!! AMERICA'S MOST
WANTED HERE, SMOKE 'EM IF YA GOT 'EM!!!

(Zane tackles him and covers his mouth.)

Zane

If I tell you, will you shut the fuck up?

(Javan nods and mumbles.)

How do I know? You're nuts anyway.

(Javan makes a cross motion and mumbles promises.)

Not good enough.

(Javan offers what's left of the sweet roll. Zane grabs it with his free hand.)

Fine...

(Zane lets go. He eats the rest of the roll in one bite.)

Javan

(sucking in air)... I forgot how to breathe...Zaney, how do you...I can't...

(Zane punches him in the stomach. Javan exhales heavily.)

Thanks...

Zane

My pleasure.

(Zane walks to his bed and pulls out the lump of coal. He tosses it to Javan.)

It was coal dust.

(Javan bites it as one would a counterfeit penny. He spits and wipes his mouth out with his sleeve.)

Javan

Yep. Sure is...coal...

Zane

Coal...

Javan

I don't get it. This is your project?

Zane

Well...yeah.

Javan

Did Christmas come already? Santa must have passed me up again. Dammit, ever since that soy milk he--

Zane

Will you stop being insane for two seconds!?

Javan

Okay okay...sorry. I'll zip it.

(He hands the coal back.)

So uh...can I have one?

Zane

No.

Javan

Please...

Zane

That's the only one I got! It came in through the window.

Javan

What?

(He looks up.)

That window?

Zane

No, the one in the floor.

Javan

Now you know that doesn't even make sense. Coal doesn't fall up...right?

Zane

Ugh...It just fell through up there one night. You were asleep, and it went right down the back of my shirt... while I was shitting my corn. God it was hot. Singed the hair right off my back.

Javan

Back hair's ugly anyway.

Zane

Glad you care.

Javan

Could someone could have thrown it?

Zane

We're too high up.

Javan

How do you know?

Zane

Well, my freaky friend, we're...we're...

(A beat.)

Javan

What?

Zane

Shit...I can't remember.

Javan

Remember what?

Zane

How high we are.

Javan

You said that wasn't cocaine!

(Zane smacks him upside the head)

Ow...

Zane

I mean from the ground outside. That doesn't make sense...I don't even remember the last time I went outside...seen the outside even...Javan?

Javan

Yeah Zaney?

Zane

When's the last time you've been outside?

Javan

Oh, they take you out every few days or so. I think there's a law or something that says they have to.

Zane

And when was that?

Javan

A few days or so ago.

Zane

And how come I don't remember that?

Javan

No idea. It's okay. I don't remember either...Do you know what that means?

Zane

What?

(Javan hugs him.)

Javan

We're the same!!!

Zane

Get off of me! Get! OFF!

(Javan lets go.)

Javan

I've been crazy alone for so long! I'm so glad I have a friend. You can have all the sweet rolls from now on...

Zane

No no no...I know I'm not crazy...

Javan

That's how you know you are!

Zane

Listen...we must have gone outside at some point. We *must* have...

Javan

Does it really matter? I mean, it's not like they'd let us wander the countryside anyway.

We might as well learn to like what we have in front of us.

(He looks in the toilet.)

Right?

(He looks at Zane.)

He says right too. Be happy within your means.

Zane

How do you know?

Javan

Know what?

Zane

That there's countryside to wander...I can't even remember what it looks like out there...it must have been so long...Are we in the city? Or on an island? I *should* know this--I *must*--a sane person would! My God--it could be a fucking space station out there for all we know...

Javan

Nah. Then we couldn't breathe.

(Javan looks up at the window.)

It'd be nice though. Up in space. We could see the stars. I knew all the constellations. All these neat little pictures. And sometimes, if you stayed really really still, and stared really really hard...they'd *move*! Orion, Draco, Andromeda...Oh oh, Andromeda was my favorite! She's this beautiful woman with these chained hands outstretched. She said she was the most beautiful woman in the land, so Neptune made the gods tied her to a rock. Someone told me the whole story once...it was...I knew some...huh...why can't I remember that?

(Zane stands on the toilet and tries to pull himself up to the window.)

What are you up to?

Zane

(struggling) I...want to...see...where the bloody hell...we are.

Javan

Are you that curious?

Zane

Yes! Aren't you!? I don't know if it's what they put in the food or what, but for some reason I can't remember where I am! Maybe if I...see what's out there...It'll unclog something in my skull...

Javan

I don't think you're tall enough.

Zane

No...damn it...almost...shit.

Javan

You're a growing boy. Just give it a few years. Then you'll be able to try out for the basketball team.

(Zane jumps off the toilet.)

Zane

Come here.

Javan

What's your game?

Zane

I'm going to get on your shoulders. Come here.

Javan

Wait...can we talk about this? I'm still growing too. I'll be stunted.

Zane grabs him and pushes him down in front of the toilet.

Jesus! How much corn do you eat!?

Zane

(struggling to get on his shoulders) Just hold still...c'mon...use your legs!

Javan

I can't do it Zaney! You're heavy--we'll fall through the window in the floor.

Zane

Be quiet or they'll hear us! C'mon. Push!

(Javan rises with Zane on his shoulders.)

Javan

Pain...painful...painstaking...pain pills...Zaney, I'm in pain. Can...can you get off now?

Zane

Just a little longer. Now step on the toilet seat.

Javan

I can't...

Zane

You can! C'mon...

(Javan struggles and steps onto the toilet seat.)

YES!!! Now hold still. I'm going to pull myself just a bit.

Javan

Zaney, I want off this ride now. It's really high up here, and you're really heavy.

Zane

Hang tight...

(Zane pulls himself up a bit and looks out the window.)

Javan

What's up there Zaney?

Zane

The moon. It's really bright. It hurts to look at...ugh... And it looks like it's raining...it's...no, it can't be...

Javan

Hurry up. I'm going...going...going...

(Zane sticks his head out the widow. The hooded figure enters.)

Hooded Figure

You shouldn't do that.

(Something hard hits Zane's head.)

Zane

YOW!!!!

(Javan collapses. They tumble to the floor and moan in pain.)

Javan

I'm gone...sorry...sorry...

(The hooded figure turns to exit. Zane jumps up.)

Zane

Hold on--I'm not done with you! Where in the hell are we!?

(The hooded figure turns. Her face is still hidden.)

Hooded Figure

Somewhere.

Zane

Oh, now Friar Tuck has a sense of humor. What kind of somewhere rains chunks of searing *coal*, I'd like to know!?

Hooded Figure

Who needs to know?

Zane

I do! It's my fucking right!

Hooded Figure

Let me ask you...

(The hooded figure lets down her hood, revealing a beautiful young lady.)

Why are you here?

Zane

(changing his tone of voice) Wow...ugh...sorry for the language sweet thing. Why would you wear a hood to cover up that pretty face? What made you pick guard duty as a profession?

Hooded Figure

I asked you, why are you here?

Zane

Oh that? Phew...well honey, you'd think less of me if I told. It's not polite.

Hooded Figure

You don't know, do you?

Zane

Well...you see I...

(long beat)

No. I don't.

(She eyes Javan, still on the ground.)

Hooded Figure

Does he?

Zane

He barely remembers which way is up.

Hooded Figure

I see.

(She turns to exit.)

Zane

Wait. You didn't answer my question!

(She puts up her hood and exits.)

Damn it, I don't care if you *are* hot! Tell me where in the hell we are!!! AHH!

(He kicks the bars in frustration, then dances on one foot nursing his stubbed toe.)

Owowowowow....

Javan

(still on the floor) Zaney?

Zane

Quit calling me that! I'm perfectly sane...

Javan

But that's your name.

(A long beat)

Zaney?

Zane

What the FUCK do you want?

Javan

I think I know where we are.

Zane

...Yeah. Me too.

(A long beat.)

Do you remember what you did to get here?

Javan

No.

Zane

Why don't we know? We're hear for...a reason. I mean, no one's perfect, but I'm sure what we did couldn't have been *that* bad. Could it?

(Javan finally rises, wincing in pain.)

Javan

We could have killed someone.

Zane

Not possible. I can't kill anything.

Javan

But we can't remember. Who knows what we were capable of?

Zane

I couldn't do that.

Javan

Why not?

Zane

When I was a kid, my grandpa took me fishing. He was one of those hunter, fisher, camo guys. When he wasn't working he was always off in his camper chasing after something. In rain, in snow, in desert heat. He was from...a different era, you know? Like...the Bronze Age. Catching your own food to survive was, like...some right of passage. So one day he bought me a fishing pole and dragged me to some... lake... West Virginia I think it was. I caught my first fish, a sweet little brook trout. I loved it--it kind-of shimmered in the sun. They don't stock brook trout, you know...they're all natural, fresh from the stream. It was looking at me while it dangled on its hook, staring. I mean, I know fish don't really blink, but it's still...unnerving. Incriminating. Like they know what you're about to do, and they hate you for it. Grandpa gave me a knife and told me to gut it so he could stick it in his cooler to freeze. I...I couldn't do it. I've done some awful things--I know I have, even if I can't remember them...but I know I couldn't do that if I couldn't hurt a fucking fish. It's just those eyes. If you do someone wrong, to anyone, anything, it's always the eyes you remember the most.

Javan

I liked fishing. I used dynamite.

Zane

What?

Javan

Sure. Just throw a stick of old TNT and whamo...instant dinner. They float right up to the surface. Not really very fun when you think about it...not exactly challenging. But you can't argue with the results.

Zane

I just don't get it.

Javan

What's there to get about TNT? It's apocalypse for dummies.

Zane

No, not that. How come we remember that, but we can't remember something as important as what we did to get here?

Javan

Maybe there's nothing to remember.

Zane

What?

Javan

Yeah...yeah...hang on...let me think about it. Ohh...on second thought, why don't *you* think about it. Thinking's making my head hurt.

Zane

Keep going. You're on a roll.

(Javan takes a beat. He walks over to the toilet, puts his ear, in the bowl, and listens.)

Javan

Okay okay...that's good...hmm...right...he says what if...what if we really didn't do anything at all. It's all like...some kind of test. You know, to see if we're good enough for...something...

Zane

For...what?

Javan

You know...that long walk in the bright light...

Zane

That can't be right.

Javan

Why not? It's sounding pretty good to me. Light, right... You even made it rhyme.

Zane

That would mean that I'm...that we're...you know...gone...

Javan

No we're not! We're right here. If we were gone, then we wouldn't be here. We'd be there.

Zane

You're exactly right!

Javan

I am?

(Zane slaps him.)

OW! What was that for?

Zane

Did you feel that?

Javan

Yeah. It hurt.

Zane

We both still *feel*. And you know what--I'm *hungry*. You were hungry--for God's sake you tried to eat my damn toes.

Javan

That's not fair. It was just the nails. I was careful.

Zane

So...somehow...we have to still be okay. If we weren't, we wouldn't be able to feel anything. And we wouldn't eat either.

Javan

Sure. I think.

Zane

Did I ever tell you you're a genius?

Javan

A few days ago I'm sure. We just don't remember.

Zane

You're. A. Genius.

(He embraces him vehemently and kisses his cheek in joy.)

Javan

AHH! Don't touch me! DON'T TOUCH ME!

(Zane lets go and spits. He goes to the sink to wash out his mouth.)

Zane

Yuk...Sorry. Can't help it. I'm a lover not a fighter.

Javan

Your slap says otherwise. Don't...don't do that again, okay?

Zane

Alright. Scouts honor. I'm sorry.

Javan

Thanks.

(Javan goes to his bed and sits.)

Zaney?

Zane

Yeah?

Javan

What do we do now?

Zane

Well, this is some sort of test, right? So...a test for what? How well we know math?

We're playing a game of Monopoly without the fucking rulebook. What do these guys want from us? They have to be looking for something. Something specific. And when we show them, they'll let us out.

Javan

Like...good will towards man?

Zane

Yeah.

(A beat.)

Javan

Do you still want the sweet rolls?

Zane

No. They're delicious, though. Next time, dig in. I won't stop you.

Javan

Really, I'd like you to have them.

Zane

They're yours. You always want them more than me. I was just trying to piss you off.

Javan

No! They're yours!

Zane

Yours!

(Silence.)

Javan

I don't think that's getting us anywhere.

Zane

Nope.

(A beat.)

It's funny how they always serve us the same dinner. Every day.

Javan

But they *are* good sweet rolls.

Zane

When's the last time you had something besides sweet rolls?

Javan

Oh...a few days ago.

Zane

What was it?

Javan

Umm...well...

Zane

Can't remember?

Javan

No...I know I like the sweet rolls better though.

Zane

But that's it. Our memory. It's funny how selective it is, right?

Javan

We're getting old Zaney. It happens.

Zane

Yeah, but... We can remember some things perfectly, but the recent, more pressing stuff is going right through our ears.

Javan

What are you saying?

Zane

I'm saying, maybe there's something to that. Maybe our ticket out of here is in what little we *can* remember! I mean, think about it...Someone could have fished through our brains, scrubbed clean everything that wasn't important, and left just enough for us to figure something out! To remember something good we did, or something meaningful in our lives that deserves a reward!

Javan

Like a lobotomy!?! That would explain everything! That would mean...Zaney? Zany!

(He holds his hairline up and goes to the toilet to look at his reflection.)

There are scars! Zaney, I see scars on my head. They took out my brain and put it in a jar! It might still be in one!

(Zane grabs Javan and looks at him closely.)

Zane

Calm down! I don't see anything. You're sex in a can.

Javan

Really?

Zane

Really. You're brain is fine...relatively speaking.

Javan

I'm taking your word for it.

Zane

Have I ever been wrong?

Javan

Maybe a few days ago.

Zane

Exactly.

Javan

So, we need to remember something?

Zane

That's the idea.

Javan

Wow. Okay...so, should we make a list of what we know or something?

Zane

That's the genius I love. Hang on.

(Zane grabs the lump of coal and tests writing with it on the floor.)

Check this out. We'll write down what we remember, and then see if we can find a link of some kind.

Javan

Do I get a piece of coal this time?

Zane

Actually...

(Zane grabs the coal that fell on his head earlier. He winces in pain as his hand is singed from the heat, and proceeds to dunk the coal in the toilet. After taking it out, he dries it on his shirt and tosses it to Javan.)

Merry Christmas.

Javan

I knew Santa was real. They said I was crazy but I knew--ohh, I knew.

Zane

Focus!

Javan

Sorry.

Zane

Okay. So...where do you want to start.

Javan

Well...I was conceived by a young couple on LSD--

Zane

I don't think we need to go that far.

Javan

Oh.

(Javan writes with his coal on his arm.)

“Conception. Not. Needed.” Okay, continue.

Zane

Well, I remember my grandpa taking me fishing. You got any memories that stick out to you like that?

Javan

Well...back in school I never liked anyone touching me. It wasn't that they were dirty or anything, I just...was afraid people would hurt me.

Zane

For any particular reason?

Javan

No, not really...Mom really liked the switch though. You know me Zaney...You see that I'm...not too bright. Sometimes, I get...confused. I screw things up. Say some silly things.

Zane

This place would make anyone nuts after awhile. You said so yourself.

Javan

Yeah, but...I remember I've kind-of always been that way a bit. It's funny...I don't mean to be weird. My mind just sometimes moves in these odd directions. Like corn. I'm hungry--did you say you'll let me have your corn next time they serve dinner?

Zane

Focus.

Javan

Oh. No corn. Alright. What was I saying?

(Zane chalks down a few notes.)

Zane

Your mom?

Javan

Yeah. Mom. I had this habit of repeating myself...Saying things over and over again. You know, things I've said a few days ago? I couldn't help it, it just slipped out. She'd get mad every time I did it, and it usually wasn't anything particularly...nice. So, she'd...When I did it, she'd take me to this big maple we had in our front yard. It had all

kinds of thick twigs growing on it. And when you broke one off and swung it around, it *whistled*. You know...

(Javan mimes swinging a stick in slow motion, whistling for effect.)

Zane

Ouch.

Javan

Yeah. Anyway, Mom would pick me up, put me on the lowest branch, and say, "Go ahead. Pick your switch." And so...I'd climb. Climbing itself is pretty fun you know, but...the heights part isn't so fun. I can't stand heights. And the falling--that's even worse. Does anyone really like the falling? Sure, the air doesn't hurt, but the ground sure does.

Zane

Focus.

Javan

Yeah. Well, the twigs at the top of the tree were always the smallest, so I'd close my eyes and climb to the top. The smaller the twig, the less they hurt your backside, if you know what I mean. It was so tall--taller than our house even--I probably could have jumped to the roof I wanted to. But every time I'd come down with a small twig, she'd make me go up to get a bigger one. So, I got a bigger one, but only by a little. By the time Mom settled on a switch I usually had taken five or six climbs up there.

Zane

(while writing) That's awful.

Javan

So...yeah...I remember that.

Zane

How do you normally feel when you remember that?

Javan

I dunno. Sad maybe. When kids at school would tap on my shoulder, I would think about that. Silly, right?

Zane

That's not silly at all.

Javan

I got better.

Zane

That you did.

Javan

You think so?

Zane

I know so.

(A beat.)

It was the opposite for me. I couldn't stop touching.

Javan

That sounds...creepy.

Zane

No! I didn't mean it that way. I mean, I was...I was the bully kid. The old stereotype.

Javan

Stereotypes exist for a reason.

Zane

That they do. Both my parents worked, and I kind-of learned to keep myself entertained.

And when I was around people, I got...worked up. I didn't really know how to act around people, how to get attention, so I...did some pretty crazy stuff. Especially college, oh man the stories I could tell! I could light a fart clear across--

Javan

(while writing) Did it work?

Zane

What do you mean?

Javan

Did you get attention?

Zane

Hell yeah, I did! Of course, I regret a lot of it, but it did have some nice payoffs.

Javan

You got paid? Dollars or Euros?

Zane

Women.

Javan

Ahh...the oldest currency around.

Zane

I had so many girls. Sometimes one at a time, sometimes all at the same time. I'm not bragging or anything, but...What can I say? I had a gift. I loved women, they loved me. It was a mutual relationship.

Javan

Did you have any favorites?

Zane

Oh sure...There was one who...and then she...well...Her name was...How about that?

Javan

What?

Zane

Our friends wiped those memories. I can't even picture their faces. But...I still remember them there. It's like...I remember the pictures as clear as day, but when I look at them, there's just an empty cut-out where I know they should be. Wow, I liked those girls too. That kind-of ticks me off.

Javan

When we get out of here, I wonder if we'll get them back.

Zane

I hope so. Without our memories, what's left of us anyway?

Javan

I feel like half a shell now. Like...a half-cracked cashew. Zaney...

(A beat.)

I want to be me again. I...I can't live like this.

Zane

It'll be okay. I'm here with you. We'll get through this.

Javan

Yeah...

Zane

Let's try you. A handsome guy like you has bound to have had a lady or two.

Javan

(sheepishly) Oh no. Just one.

Zane

C'mon man, details details details!

Javan

I can't...

Zane

Hey, this is need-to-know stuff here. We're on a mission, remember?

Javan

Well...yeah. Okay. What do you want to know?

Zane

You remember her name?

Javan

As a matter of fact, I do.

Zane

Ah, now that's no fair! You get to keep names, while they deleted my whole damn contact list!

Javan

Sorry.

Zane

Well...What is it?

Javan

Helena.

Zane

Classy.

Javan

She was too. Everyone liked her. Except I avoided her like the plague. Me and dating...ewwww...Gave me the shivers just thinking about it. Too much...touchy feely.

Zane

That's the best part!

Javan

Not for me. But one day, she tracked me down--I tried to head to the bathroom, a man's final safe haven--but she headed me off. She asked if I would meet her that afternoon to help her with astronomy homework. I didn't do very well in the class myself, so I don't really know why she was asking me, but like a blundering idiot I said sure anyway.

Zane

You don't see it?

Javan

See what?

Zane

She was totally hitting on you!

Javan

Nah...

Zane

You're in denial. And why wouldn't she? You're an interesting guy.

Javan

Focus!

Zane

That's my line!

Javan

Will you let me finish then?

Zane

Fine...

Javan

Anyway, we met at a coffee shop and went through some star-gazing books halfheartedly. But really we just kind-of talked about everything else. Everything she could think of, and everything I couldn't. I say odd things sometimes, so I just tried to stay quiet. I think she took me for a good listener.

(Zane continues to write.)

Then she asked me if I ever really looked up at the stars. I mean really, intensely. I said no, and she grabbed my hand and drove me to this little hillside off the main road. You could lie on your back, look up forever, and not get dizzy or anything. She knew all the constellation stories. She told me about...Hey...

Zane

What?

Javan

I remember! She's the one who told me about Andromeda. And Percius! And Cassiopeia! She knew them all! And she took out a marker and traced out Sagittarius on my arm. My freckles, they resemble Sagittarius when you trace them, see?

(Javan traces the lines on his arm with his coal. He shows it to Zane.)

Zane

I'll take your word for it.

Javan

Yeah, and she...She touched me. She touched my arm, then my hand. I didn't jump once. It was soft and...and warm.

Zane

Heaven hath no beauty like the touch of a lady.

Javan

And then I...I touched her back. I cupped her face, around her cheeks, and she smiled at me. And then I...I...

(Javan stops.)

Zane

What?

Javan

Oh no...

Zane

You okay?

Javan

I didn't--I didn't mean--I would never--AHHH!!!

He runs to the toilet and looks into the bowl.

IT WAS YOU!!! YOU BASTARD!!! YOU DID IT!!!

Zane

Stop! Calm down!

(Javan runs to the bars and shakes them with all his might. He screams as loud as his voice will allow.)

Javan

LET ME OUT!!! I WANT OUT!!! I WANT OUT!!! PLEASE, LET ME OUT!!!

(Zane grips him in a bare hug, doing his all to calm Javan's hysteria.)

Zane

What's gotten into you!?

(Javan sinks to the floor. He sobs for several beats.)

Javan

I touched her...and I touched her some more...and she said no, enough...and I kept going. Zaney, I was in love, and I didn't want to stop...but it was too much. Zaney, that's why I'm here. I did her wrong. And I'm sorry...I'm so sorry...

Zane

Hey, we're in this together. Calm down. Shh...hey hey...shhh...

Javan

You did someone wrong Zane. We're the same.

(A beat.)

Zane

(stuttering) I'm sorry, but...you got me wrong. I never...I didn't...I'm not a...

Javan

You're just like me Zaney.

Zane

No!

Javan

Yes!

Zane

NO!!!

(Zane begins to choke him. He pins Javan to floor as he does so.)

How dare you...I never...never...would not...no...never never never!!!

(A few beats.)

(The cell door opens of its own volition. Zane stops choking Javan, in awe of what he just witnessed. Javan wheezes and coughs as he tries to regain his breath.)

Zane

It opened...

Javan

(faintly) Zaney?

Zane

Yeah?

Javan

I forgot how to breathe.

(The hooded figure enters.)

Hooded Figure

Are you ready?

Zane

Yes.

Hooded Figure

Not you.

(She kneels by Javan.)

Do you accept what you've done?

Javan

Yes.

(She helps Javan up to his feet by offering her shoulder. Javan leans on her liberally as they move to exit the cell. Zane blocks their path.)

Zane

Where are you taking him?

Hooded Figure

To be judged.

(Zane moves from their path. They exit the cell. As Zane moves to follow, the cell door closes of its own volition, trapping Zane inside.)

Zane

Wait...What are you doing!? WHY AM I STILL HERE!? I DID NOTHING
WRONG!!!

(The hooded figure turns to face him through the bars.)

Hooded Figure

What were their names?

Zane

You tell me! You stole them!

Hooded Figure

Memories are fragile things. But they are powerful things. There are some that we can take, and some we cannot. And some are intentionally buried so deep, so deliberately ignored that no one can find them. But they are always there. Trust me, they are there.

(The hooded figure and Javan exit. Zane stands in the center of his cell.)

Zane

I can't remember. It's not there. Nothing's there. Something was there but now it's gone. A memory--any memory. I can't remember.

(He feels his face.)

I'm old. I'm old and I can't remember.

(He walks to the toilet and looks in the bowl.)

Young sir, young sir. Do you remember? Because it certainly looks like you do.

Hmm...What's that? What's that you say?

(He puts his ear to the toilet bowl. The toilet flushes as the lights fade.)

End Curtain

